

# The Awan Congressional Scandal

Group of IT aides hired by 44 House Democrats gained unauthorized access to congressional servers

## TIMELINE



**C**ongressional data belonging to at least 44 House Democrats has been put at risk by a group of IT aides. Imran Awan, a Pakistani national and naturalized American citizen, has worked for Congress since 2000. Several of his family members, including his brother Abid Awan and his wife Hina Alvi Awan, were added to the congressional payroll after Imran hit the pay cap—making as much as a congressman.

The individuals were hired as IT aides

and paid up to \$160,000 a year, despite having little to no IT experience. In total, six IT workers connected to Imran joined the payroll.

In September 2016, the House Office of Inspector General briefed House leadership that the Awans had had frequent unauthorized access to congressional servers, including those of 15 members they were not employed by.

They also made excessive logons to the Democratic Caucus server, on average 27 times per day, which according to the IG report could have been used to "store documents taken from other offices or evidence of other illicit activity."

Two computers used by the Awans had Dropbox installed on them, which is prohibited under House rules.

"While file sharing sites, such as Dropbox, have legitimate business purposes, use of such sites is also a classic method for insiders to exfiltrate data from an organization," the IG report states.

The IG report also states that thousands of files, many of which had the hallmarks of containing sensitive material, were found in the Dropbox account.

It is unclear whether the file left Congress. However, the material the IT aides had access to would be of great interest to groups, businesses, and foreign intelligence agencies.

In February 2017, four months after the IG sounded the alarm bell, the IT aides had their access to congressional servers revoked.